

G.I. Joe Yearbook 2

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G.I. JOE Yearbook #2

Cover Date: March, 1986

Triple Play

Writer: Larry Hama

Art: Michael Golden

Summary: Somewhere in Afghanistan, a Russian helicopter carrying Daina and Schrage of the October Guard attacks a group of Afghani tribesman to test their new laser weapon, mounted on the 'copter. The tribesman and their camels are being fired upon. On a hillside overlooking the scene, a group of men disguised in tribesman garb look on. Another 'copter appears, this time carrying Colonel Brekhov, Stormavik and Horrorshow (who's too big to fit comfortably in the cockpit). Brekhov tells Daina to take it easy and not follow the tribesman into a nearby canyon. But, it's too late. It was a trap! Waiting in the canyon are a group of Cobras, led by Destro, the Baroness and Firefly, their tanks and ASP guns lined up and ready to fire on the 'copters. The tribesmen were Cobra soldiers in disguise.

Destro is in command and orders the Cobras to fire high, forcing one helicopter down on fire retardant foam, being sure the laser remains intact. The plan works, but Brekhov's damaged 'copter is able to get away. Daina and Schrage are captured and the disguised tribesman get into an old jeep they're driving so they can follow the Cobras' armor column.

Sometime later, the Cobra vehicles (HISS tanks, Stinger jeeps and ASPs) are on their way to the landing zone when someone spots armored vehicles approaching from the mountains. It's Brekhov, Horrorshow and Stormavik in a heavily armed tank and six-wheeled jeep. Destro's tank (and the trailer carrying the laser) is hit, and overturns. On one of the Stinger jeeps, the captured Daina hopes that Destro didn't survive and the Baroness whacks her in the head for it. Firefly's driving and he tries to turn around, but the combination of rough terrain and Daina's unwillingness to sit still (she bites the Baroness after getting hit) causes him to lose control, skidding into another Stinger jeep. The collision sets Daina and Schrage free. Meanwhile, Brekhov sends Horrorshow running after the laser. When he's fired upon he's appalled by the Cobras' disregard for their own: "What? The Cobras are shooting at me even when their own men are in the way?! For shame!" Some nearby Cobras are killed by fire from a HISS tank, but Horrorshow fires his missile launcher, destroying the tank. The October Guard load the laser into their tank and mount their vehicles as quickly as possible, not even taking the time to untie Daina and Schrage. As the Cobras recover and the October Guard drive off, the disguised tribesmen are still watching. One notes that they'll be easily overrun by the October Guard vehicles. "Not to worry," one of the pseudo-tribesmen says, "We got something stashed over the next rise!" Meanwhile, Destro has a plan. He tells a Tele-Viper to reroute the helicopter extraction unit they were heading to meet. The disguised tribesmen get to their "stash": an old World War II "Mosquito Bomber" -- a small propeller-driven plane -- hidden under camouflage netting.

Some time later, the October Guard vehicles are meeting up with a train that will bring the laser safely into Pakistan. Just as they're about to meet up with the old style locomotive (driven by "comrade Dragonsky"), Daina spots two Cobra Rattlers diving from the sky towards the vehicles. With no time to waste, Brekhov decides to load the vehicles on the train while it's still moving. They get on board under fire from the Rattlers. Schrage fires the tank's anti-aircraft gun, destroying one of the Rattlers. While the second pilot comes around for another pass, Brekhov orders Horrorshow to quickly get the laser on the train's mail car. Daina starts firing on the diving Rattler with her Dragunov sniper rifle. The Rattler pilot isn't impressed, but Daina was only distracting the pilot so Stormavik could lock-on with his surface to air missile and destroy the Rattler.

Soon, the train reaches a bridge: an obvious ambush point. Beneath the bridge, Firefly and a group of Cobra Eels have placed charges on the bridge. They blow up the bridge so that the train's last car -- the one carrying the vehicles -- falls into the water below, but still making certain the laser remains intact in the forward car. Schrage realizes that the attack was meant to take out their anti-aircraft capability. On cue, a Cobra transport chopper appears, flanked by FANG 'copters and "Trouble-Bubbles" (Flight Pods). As the October Guard secure the laser, the traintrack's switch is thrown by the disguised tribesman, who get back in their plane and fly off. They've rerouted the train towards the local dockyards.

The Cobra transport chopper has started to offload troops onto the train's last car, led by Destro and the Baroness. Dragonsky appears, now wearing high-tech flamethrower gear. He ignites the flamethrower, sending a wall of fire at the charging Cobras, taking out all of them except for Destro and the Baroness. Brekhov takes out the chopper with a grenade launcher and the rest of the team makes quick work of the last few FANGs and Trouble-Bubbles.

The train reaches the end of the dock, only to stop between a freighter flying the stars and stripes and the disguised tribesmen's bomber. The freighter is carrying several members of the G.I. Joe team, their weapons aimed at the October Guard and the Cobras. The tribesmen standing atop the bomber are actually Flint, Stalker, Footloose, Dusty and Spirit.

Over a bullhorn, Cutter tells the train to prepare to be boarded and relieved of stolen United States property. As Duke and Alpine are lowered onto the train by the freighter's cargo crane, Brekhov shouts, "Ridiculous! This is piracy!" The laser was designed and built by Russian scientists. Flint disagrees, pointing out that the laser was designed by Americans and stolen by Russian spies. As Duke loads the laser onto the freighter, he tells Brekhov that they don't really need the laser, but by examining it, the US can find their information leak and plug it. Brekhov seems to be throwing a tantrum on the dock as the Joes sail off into the sunset.

Review: Ever since the October Guard first appeared in issue #6 and 7, G.I. Joe fans waited for their return. The letter columns often asked when they would appear again. It took about four years for Larry Hama to catch on, but the October Guard come back with a bang. "Triple Play" is strange addition to the G.I. Joe comics, particularly because the Joes are surprisingly little more than a supporting cast. It's easy to suspect the disguised tribesman are Joes, but we really don't know until the very end of the issue. The October Guard and Cobra are our main characters, making it a "bad guy" story. But here, as was sometimes the case in the 1980s, the Russians are portrayed as a lesser evil who have to join with the US to face the even more evil villains.

As in their first appearance, the October Guard are far from inept adversaries. They are often every bit as skilled at their job as the Joes are. They nearly defeat the Cobras before the Joes step in. In Larry Hama's stories, there's something appealing about the October Guard. Maybe it's the fact that they seem more "working class" than some of the more superheroic Joes, or maybe it's they're stereotypically Russian pride in "the motherland." Sometimes the October Guard are just caricatures of the Cold War Russians, poking fun at them and at their image as well. Colonel Brekhov is constantly spouting arrogant pride in all things Russian while chomping on a cigar and drinking from a bottle of Vodka. The story expands somewhat on the Guard's characters, particularly fleshing out Brekhov, Horrorshow and Daina. Horrorshow is the big, dumb Russian soldier, but he's disgusted to see Cobras firing on their own men. Daina very much follows the G.I. Joe tradition of tough women, very much contrasting with her original appearance, where she seemed much less intelligent and was even a bit of an "airhead". Here, Brekhov describes her "natural bloodthirsty tendencies" and she fights back even when she's Cobra's prisoner.

The story is one of the best action-packed of the series. The battle scenes make tactical sense and Michael Golden's artwork makes them easy to follow. Speaking of Golden's artwork, it's some of the best in the series, and it's a shame that except for this story, Golden sticks to Joe covers. Some consider his dynamic style too "cartoony", but the great detail he puts into his drawings make the story worth reading. The Cobra vehicles are very accurate, as are their and the Joes uniforms/costumes. The back cover image of the October Guard has become, for many, the definitive design of the Russians. He even creates October Guard vehicles that are every bit as unique as the Joe and Cobra vehicles. In the end, the story is one of my favorites, due to the return of the October Guard and the sense of fun that just fills "Triple Play." This, by the way, is the first G.I. Joe Yearbook to include an original story, instead of a reprint like Yearbook #1.

Reprinted in:

- Action Force #30 - 35 (Sept 26th - Oct 31st, 1987). A Marvel UK series featuring the UK's version of G.I. Joe reprints this story in six parts, alongside an original story. All references to "G.I. Joe" were changed to say "Action Force".

The Television Joes:

An uncredited article, this feature is similar to a article from the first yearbook. It gives a brief glimpse into the actual making of the series, even as the 1985 cartoon season was airing on television. What makes this article interesting is the description of the new characters that will appear in the next season. These are most likely some of the earliest mentions of the new upcoming characters. It mentions Serpentor, Dialtone, Mainframe, Lifeline, Lift-Ticket, Slip-Stream and Cross Country. It also says that Sunbow had originally planned two simultaneous storylines for the beginning of the 1986 season. In addition to the story of Serpentor's creation, it would have shown "the making of a Joe", the story of how Dialtone becomes a member of the G.I. Joe team.

Cover Gallery:

This part of the book displays small pictures of the covers from issue #1 to issue #44.

And the Adventure Continues:

This segment is designed to help readers catch up to the storyline by seeing what important events they've missed. The feature is "narrated" and reprints important scenes from the series from issue #25 up to Wade Collins returning to Fred's family in issue #43. This section is actually a nice way to give new readers access to the comic book, but the order of events aren't exactly as they happened in the individual issues. Scenes are shown (in this order) from issues #25, 26, 27, 31, 32, 36, 34, 33, 42, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42 and #43.

Memo from Hawk:

The inside back cover features another "memo" from Hawk, briefly talking about the past year and mentioning the creation of Cobra Island and his new promotion, which actually occurs in issue #45, in the same month as this yearbook

is published. There's little of significance here.